

TEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

ENCOUNTER OF WORLD RELIGIONS WITH TRADITIONAL CULTURES

HISTORY, LANGUAGE, MYTH AND RELIGION

I. Jesudasan

FAITH AND BELIEF IN WORLD RELIGIONS

John B. Chethimattam

AUTHENTICITY IN CONFUCIAN SPIRITUALITY

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DIALOGICAL STANDPOINT ILLUSTRATED

BY THE CASTE - SYSTEM

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MODELS FOR THE

"COMING CONVERGENCE OF WORLD RELIGIONS"

Frank Podgorski

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The Meeting of Religions

**ENCOUNTER OF WORLD RELIGIONS
WITH TRADITIONAL CULTURES**

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Editorial

The theme of this issue is World Religions in encounter with Traditional Cultures. Today practice in individual religions has generally dwindled, but religion itself has gained a strange popularity, even among youth. The Hare Krishna movement, the Jesus movement, Pentecostalism and others are indications of it. The reason for this paradox is the relationship between world religions and traditional cultures: These cultures are undergoing radical changes within themselves, and these have affected the religions too that used them as context and medium for communicating their faiths through appropriate beliefs.

On the one hand certain beliefs and practices that were directed against some evils in certain definite cultural situations have become irrelevant today. On the other hand, the militant atheism of a large section of humanity today has served to direct the attention of many to the need for religion. The prospects of a total holocaust of humanity by its own nuclear inventions has sent men searching for deeper solutions to their problems. Above all the re-emergence of the Asian and African religions into world attention with the gaining of independence of the long-subjugated countries of these two continents, has brought into sharp focus the contrast between universal religious values and their different cultural expressions.

We have chosen to discuss in this number certain aspects of this encounter of World Religions with traditional cultures. I. Jesudasan in a theoretical article analyzes the origin and inter-dependence of Language, Myth and Religion, bringing to bear upon the problem the insight of contemporary philosophy. My contribution on Faith and Beliefs seeks to study the distinction and inter-dependence between the two fundamental categories of religion. Thomas Berry of the Fordham University

takes up for discussion the specific case of the Confucian religion at one of its historic moments. Isanand Vempeny examines the most evident case in the matter for India, the caste system and its religio-cultural implications. Frank Podgorski of the Seaton Hall University studies two recent attempts by two well-known scholars, Robley Whitson and Raymond Panikkar, to employ symbols for making religious truths intelligible.

This study can never be comprehensive or exhaustive. Cultures are ever expanding and developing, and their modes and models of expression are continually growing and renewing themselves. Without relating itself to new modes of cultural expression religion cannot make itself relevant to the life of the people. Hence the study of religions in their relationship to the cultures that constitute their context and medium has to be an ongoing process.

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History, Language, Myth and Religion

Argument

Any understanding of the nature of history and language has serious consequences for the understanding of religion and theology. Therefore it is important for theology that we should understand the nature of History and language.

1. History

No one who has thought seriously about history would consider it as consisting of brute facts. Brute facts, therefore, even if any such existed, would not be history. No fact exists as brute fact, i. e., as a fact all by itself. Facts are facts to somebody or some mind that sees them as such. It is in relation to some mind or person that facts are constituted. Mind then is the prime fact, prior to which there is no fact. It is because the mind is the prime fact, and sees itself as the prime fact, that it sees all else in its own image, namely, as fact and as related and ordained to the fact of the mind. There are then two orders of fact: the first order of the mind, and the second order of the non-mind. It is in relation or ordination to the mind that the non-mind shares in the mind's own factual character. Analysis of the linguistic process involved would show that it is by analogy that the non-mind is called fact.¹ History then is the

1. It may be disputed whether this analogy is one of intrinsic or extrinsic attribution. If the mind confers factuality, it would seem that analogy is one of extrinsic attribution. But if things are ordained to the mind for their factuality and consequently the mind confers it on them, the process is intrinsic attribution. However, since one of the terms of reference is the mind itself, this case is differently nuanced from one where neither term of reference is the mind and as such, this analogy would call for a new name.

analogous way in which the mind constitutes or reconstructs fact internally to itself. Historicity therefore belongs radically to the mind as its connatural attribute. It is by sharing its radical historicity with all its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body that the mind sees all its bodily acts and sufferings too as historical. In terms of the mind's relation to its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body, historicity is the mind's apperception or apprehension of these consubstantial acts and sufferings. In other words, historicity is the mode of all mental perceptions, inseparable from any of them.

2. Language

It would be agreed that, like the factual character (cf. 1), the language or 'word' character too belongs primarily to the mind. Language does consist of words, but words by themselves do not constitute it. It is the relation of words to *the* word which constitutes language. Like facts, words are words to a mind or person that utters and creates them. They are the words of the mind or person that speaks them. It is by relation or ordination to some mind or person that words are constituted. The mind then is the prime word prior to which there is no word. It is because the mind is the prime word and sees and expresses itself as the prime word, that it sees and expresses all else in its own image, namely as a word and as related and ordained to *the* word, namely: the mind. There are then two orders of words: the prime word which is the mind and the secondary word which is the non-mind. It is by relation or ordination to the mind that the non-mind shares in the mind's own word-character. The process involved is again one of analogy or extension. Language then is the way of analogy in which the mind constitutes or reconstructs words internally to itself. The linguistic character, therefore, belongs radically to the mind as a connatural attribute. It is by sharing its radically linguistic or 'word' character with all its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body that the mind sees and expresses all its bodily acts and sufferings too as words. In terms of the mind's relation to its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body, linguisticity is the mind's expressibility of its apperception or apprehension of these consubstantial acts and sufferings. In other words linguisticity is the mode of all mental expressions, inseparable from any of them.

3. History is linguistic

"Our history is transmitted to us largely in the form of language. It is therefore the linguistic tradition that both bears and conceals our disposition to our history and to reality. In his famous essay on language, Edward Sapir suggested that language predetermines certain modes of observation and interpretation. Language does not merely stand at our beck and call; it is there before we are: it situates us, it restricts our horizon, it refuses us its total complicity." In fact "... language has erupted as a root problem in contemporary thought and theology."² There is an intimate relationship between language and history. That which constitutes a historical event cannot be dissociated from the linguistic description of it. The very process of analogy by which facts are constituted as facts by the mind or person whose facts they are, is essentially a linguistic process. We have already seen that historicity belongs radically to the mind as its connatural attribute and that it is by sharing its radical historicity with all its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body, that it sees all its bodily acts and sufferings as history, which is therefore the mind's own apperception or apprehension of these consubstantial acts and sufferings. We have also seen that linguisticity belongs radically to the mind as its connatural attribute and that it is by sharing its radical linguisticity or 'word' character with the non-mind or with all its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body, that it sees and expresses its consubstantial acts and sufferings as words or language, which is therefore the mind's expression of its apperception or apprehension of these consubstantial acts and sufferings. In short we have seen historicity as the mode of all mental perceptions and linguisticity as the mode of all mental expressions. When historicity is defined as the analogous way in which the mind constitutes and reconstructs facts internally to itself; and linguisticity as the analogous way in which the mind expresses the facts thus apperceived and apprehended, the intimate relation between historiography and language becomes clear,

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2. Cf. *Cross Currents*, Vol XX, No. 1, Winter 1970, History as Myth p. 17. The *Cross Currents* article is a summary of a book of the same title by Taylor Stevenson, published by Seabury Press, New York 1969.

namely that facts and language are themselves analogous and hence convertible to each other, because of their analogy to the mind itself. Consequently, history, far from being primarily concerned with "objective facts", is, by its very nature, involved in the complexities and ambiguities of language. Vico saw this relationship with amazing incisiveness in the 18th century. Martin Buber and Heidegger and those associated with the "new hermeneutic"³ among others, have taken up this perception in the 20th century.

4. Language is historical

The analogy and convertibility of fact and language like the convertibility of light and sound, show first that there is no unbridgeable gap between fact and language. The reason is (and that is the meaning of analogy) that language itself is a fact or an event, constituted as such by the mind. The reason why this point is stressed is that language derives its radical historicity from its facticity or eventfulness to the mind. Language after all is facticity or mental apperception of the consubstantial acts and sufferings that it expresses. Expression must correspond to apperception. This explains why language is radically historical: Language is historical because apperception itself is historical. For the rest, what is called the historicity of language is really the manifestation of its factuality or 'event' character and an indication of the indefinite future — a future different from and unbound by its past — that opens out to language and to our way of experiencing reality. It might be controverted whether the historicity of language is derived from the historicity of experience or vice versa, that historicity manifests itself in the very transmission of language, in the sense that, like a flood which washes and carries with it all it finds on its way, language too carries with it and is internally affected by traces and remnants of the ages and cultures it has passed through and in this sense it tells the story of the ages it has come from. Thus what language transmits (i.e., its object content) is history. In addition, the very transmission of language becomes

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3. Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, London, 1966, pp. XII – XIII

history, in the sense that this transmission is a linking of the people of one age (and culture) to those of another age (and culture), thus establishing and constituting at once an ongoing linguistic tradition or storehouse of memories and a community within which these memories can be handed down. These two meanings of the historicity of language are closely linked to the historicity and linguisticity of myth.

5. Myth

a) Myth is functionally described by Mircea Eliade as follows: "It narrates the sacred story of an event of primordial time of the beginnings, in other words, of how, through supernatural agency, a reality, be it the totality or a part of it, like a species, a behaviour or an institution came to be. In this sense, it is always an account of creation or of something which really happened and manifested itself completely. As descriptions of the sacred and creative acts of supernatural beings, they are narratives of the break-through of these beings into our world which establishes and constitutes it and us as what we are... It is as 'records' of sacred actions that myth becomes an exemplary model of all significant human activity."⁴ He concludes the chapter on the structure of myth with a quotation from Bonislav Malinowski, according to whom, "Studied alive, myth... is but a narrative resurrection of a primaeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function; it expresses, enhances, codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilisation; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom... These stories... are to the natives a statement of primaeval, greater and more relevant reality by which the present life, fates, and activities of mankind are determined: the knowledge of which supplies man with the motive for ritual and moral actions, as well as with indications as to how to perform them."⁵

4. *Myth and Reality*, George Allen & Unwin, 1964, pp. 6-7.

5. Quoted *ibid.*

b) Myth may therefore be described as that active force of memory, that we are generally unconscious of, which serves as the medium or method of perception, communication and fellowship – all of which are possible precisely because the medial myth is itself analogous, that is, at once universal and particular, in other words, pertaining at once to the mind and the non-mind. Myth in this sense, would be seen as the pervasive medium and atmosphere of all language, perception and history – a medium from which there can be no escape and apart from which there can be neither perception, language nor history. History, perception and language then are inseparable from myth which is their medium, the atmosphere in and by which they exist, and history becomes an aspect of this mythical medium of memory: an aspect or framework within which all communications and fellowships are rendered possible.

c) Communication is the creating of fellowship and of the experience of fellowship. The medium or method of evoking or creating the experience of fellowship is the creation or re-creation of language. In the broad sense, then, language as the created medium or framework of such communication, is mythical. Createdness then is an essential characteristic of myth and/or of the mythical order of existence. Createdness is the non-self-explanatory character of existence by which it points to something uncreated and beyond as the intelligibility principle and explanation of its existence. According to internal testimony, language as the myth or creature of the body-mind consubstantial unity, corresponds, and must correspond, to the order of perception, and history which, as created, is also within the mythical order. Thus two orders of myth emerge within our consciousness: a) that of the perceptual or historical order, and b) that of the linguistic order. The common ground for the two orders of myth is the mind itself which must be radically mythical or created in order that it may perceive, reconstruct and express all in terms of its own mythical or created nature; The mind, then, is the prime myth prior to which there is no myth; and, in terms of the mind's relation to its acts and sufferings in the consubstantial unity of the body, mythical character is not only the mind's apperception of these consubstantial acts and sufferings and facts: it is also the very analogous mode of existence of all these acts, sufferings and facts.

d) The analogous mode of existence of all acts, sufferings and facts to the mind, and the primary analogue of the mind's own existence have, and point to, a polarity which is non-analogous and is the principle of all analogy. Acts, sufferings and facts therefore are analogous not only to the mind, but, with the mind, they are analogous to being which is non-analogous and non-mythical, i. e., uncreated and uncreatable. As analogous and as myths, they point to the non-analogous and non-mythical as to that which lies beyond language and history and is able to create, i. e. manifest itself in, language and history. Analogy, creation and myth are thus synonymous terms, so that all creation is the making of analogy which is relation and relativity. And it is the recognizable analogy of language, perception, and facts or history which makes it possible for the created mythical mind to pass on to the affirmation of the unmythical Being. Language, however, at this level is different from its analogue.

e) "Being" is used here in contradistinction from "existence" and therefore is neither analogous to it nor a synonym for it. For existence is manifestation of Being and in this sense is creation; while Being by itself i. e., without myth, creation or analogy, would be unmanifest and unknowable even as to *that* which it is, let alone as to *what* it is. By virtue of this analogy of existence to Being, (which does not mean that Being is analogous to existence) it is possible to 'know' Being and God as Being (and eternal): to know, that is, analogously, and to affirm God "analogously" to ordinary speech, that is, in a system of language which runs parallel to ordinary speech and involves at once affirmation and negation. The reason for the combination of both affirmation and negation in 'God' talk is that God, as Being (and eternal), does not come under the categories of universality and particularity. God does not come under the categories of class and individual: in other words, mythical mind and its categories cannot comprehend the non-mythical God: God transcends them. It is by transcending the mind and its workings that God can be known. God is "known" in union, not in duality—the union of the manifestation or appearance to the reality which appears: the union of the noumenon and the phenomenon. The affirmation of the "phai-noumenal" or numen-manifestative character of the mind and every other fact is an affirmation of the Numen which is neither the mind nor any of

the other facts. It is therefore by denying ultimate substantiality to itself and by seeing the Numen, Being or God, as its ultimate substrate that the mind can at all engage in 'God' talk and be united to Him. Denying ultimate substantiality to itself would be reflected in negations in 'God' talk and may also result in total silence about God who, given the analogy of language, cannot be affirmed in simple statements.

f) The mythical and analogous nature of language in its bipolarity, therefore, points at once to the thing or fact to myths as well as to the non-mythical myth-maker, God. Not only does it point the speaker and listener to the 'fact' myths and to the non-mythical myth-maker, God: it also links the speaker and listener to the 'fact' myths as well as to the non-mythical myth-maker, God. It establishes a communion between them all. It creates community first between the speakers and hearers; secondly between the speakers and hearers of language on the one hand, and, on the other, those about whom it is spoken; thirdly between men and God. In all these ways, in short, it establishes society and fellowship across time and space. Distance is the great enemy to fellowship. But language bridges this gulf across space and time and renders an on-going tradition and history possible through the fostering of communication and fellowship. It takes away diachronic distance by the specific identity of the experience of fellowship between us and the people of a past epoch. In any experience of fellowship the experiencer and the one whose fellowship he enjoys must necessarily be in the same time. They become contemporaries, living in synchronic time. Language, thus, without denying the difference between synchronic and diachronic time, makes ancients our contemporaries. This is possible because the time-scheme involved in language is also analogous or relative which means, first, that the primary analogue of time is the mind prior to which there is no time, and secondly, that within the framework of memory and recall (language is a storehouse of memories i. e., a mechanism which makes the past present), past and present are not mutually exclusive, but mutually gliding and convertible into each other so that today's present can be tomorrow's past and yesterday's future. That is how language bridges time-space and makes a continuous tradition of history and society. In other words, it is because time itself is relative that relationship, communication, communion or fellow-

ship, is possible between ancients and contemporaries, and while it is there, the experience of such fellowship, as it were, suspends the succession aspect of time, freezing it into the living moment which knows no succession.

6. History as Myth

Two orders of myth have been referred to: one of them perceptual or historical and the other linguistic (cf. 5b). This means a) that history is myth and b) that language is also myth. The mythical nature of history can be indicated on several grounds. First, there is the analogy of "facts" to the mind as both fact and the writer or "recorder"; secondly, as it is implied in analogy, from the created nature of history which, we have seen, is an essential characteristic of myth; thirdly from the mediating role or role as medium which it plays in communication and fellowship (cf. 5b). The Rev. Taylor Stevenson adds a fourth reason for considering history as myth. His reasoning is drawn from an application to history of the functional definition of myth as given by Mircea Eliade:

"In *Myth and Reality*, Eliade gives five characteristic qualities of myth. First, myth 'constitutes the History of the acts of the supernaturals.' The myth of history, I would affirm, speaks of the 'history of the supernaturals' by speaking of the history of man. Within the myth of history, man has become 'supernatural.' It is man who creates meaning in the course of his historical activity; who, through his attentiveness to history, sustains this meaning through ever-renewed acts of historical apprehension; and who through historical reinterpretation redirects past and present toward new goals of his own choosing. Within the myth of history man is creator, sustainer and judge." (This divinization of man within the myth of history comes to pass for a variety of reasons, the most crucial of which is the Incarnation. The dimension of the myth of history, however, cannot be dealt with here.) Secondly, says Eliade, the story of history recounted in any myth is "absolutely true (because it is concerned with realities) and sacred (because it is the work of the supernaturals.)" If it is granted that

within the myth of history men are the 'supernaturals', then this second characteristic quality of myth applies clearly to the myth of history. History is, in common parlance, no 'myth', but the true story of reality. History deals with the 'really real'. The claim for the 'absolute truth' of history is expressed in the general understanding that ever closer approximations to "absolute" historical truth are possible through ever more refined historical judgements (in part made possible as a result of on-going historical experience), and in the presupposition that the historical approach to reality is *the* approach to reality. (This does not exclude or infringe upon the scientific approach to experience; but, rather, nature and the natural sciences are understood to be within history.) History is also clearly 'sacred'. Our unreserved commitment to the validity of history, and the importance of historical truth witness to this situation... No more damning criticism can be made of anyone than that of having falsified history, i. e., of having tampered with the 'true' and the 'sacred'. Thirdly, according to Eliade, "myth is always related to a 'creation', it tells how something came into existence... this is why myths constitute the paradigms of all significant human acts." History, the 'true' story of what has come to pass, is the myth which supplies the dominant paradigm of our civilization. Fourthly, "by knowing the myth one knows the 'origin' of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will. "Within the myth of history this control and manipulation takes the form of maintenance, development, and continual reassessment of the historical tradition which tells of the origin of things. Here it needs to be emphasised, however, that the manipulation and control exercised through any myth never violates the myth itself. Fifthly, concludes Eliade, and this is clearly applicable to history, "One 'lives' the myth, in the sense that one is seized by the sacred, exalting power of the events recollected or re-enacted."⁶

Consequently, Taylor Stevenson concludes "that what is often called 'historical consciousness' conforms essentially to what Eliade calls 'myth' and hence I believe that we are justified in asserting that history is a mythic way of viewing reality."⁷ From this mythic nature of history, he then enumerates three implications for historical inquiry and for theology. The implications for historical inquiry are:— a) The primacy of historical perception over fact and the meaningfulness of facts within the mythic perception; b) the objectivity of history as existing in the corporate judgement of the community which adheres to the mythic perception of history and is informed by it; c) The inconclusiveness of arguing the validity of history against a-historical positions and myths like those of Vedanta and therefore the only other alternative of witnessing to one's myth. At the last point, however, Taylor seems to contravene Eliade's insight by gratuitously assuming that the myth of Vedanta is a-historical which, in so far as it is myth, it cannot be.

7. Language as myth

The mythical nature of language, like that of history, may also be demonstrated on many grounds, first, from the analogy of words to the mind as *the* word; secondly, as implied in analogy, from the nature of words as creations of the mind; thirdly, from its role as medium of communication and fellowship (cf. 5c, f). Besides this communal nature, which language shares with myth, we may, in the fourth place, demonstrate the mythical nature of language from its historicity. For if, as Taylor says, history is mythical, it is because language, through which historical tradition, society and communion are constituted, is itself radically mythical on all the three grounds listed above. If language is mythical, it is because, as we said earlier (cf. 5c, d), perception and existence are mythical. Now all this has, doubtless, its bearing on religion, religious history and religious language.

8. Religion, religious history and religious language:

Religion may briefly be described as man's relationship to God in faith. Religion thus described presupposes faith and

7. Ibid.

expresses it in its own 'language' and culture. The faith which religion supposes and celebrates in its language and culture is the very relationship or fellowship of man to God. This relation or fellowship is not one which operates as it were from two separate and equal planes. It is rather a relation of total surrender and commitment rendered possible by the knowledge that all one is, is creation or an absolute (i. e. total) and gratuitous gift from God, a self-gift of God, since, that which God, as Being, gives is not outside of Being. Creaturehood is thus the starting-point of all religion and religious faith. The knowledge of God involved in religion and religious faith is one that involves, and starts from, self-knowledge. Self-knowledge becomes actual only in fellowship or communion that is historically mediated to us by society and the world of nature. Therefore the knowledge of God and faith in God also becomes actual only in fellowship or communion that is historically mediated to us by society and the world of nature as creations, myths or manifestations of Being which is God. This forms on the one hand, a theological justification of pluralism in faith and religion, while on the other, the communal and community-building character of all knowledge and especially of the knowledge of God, together with the analogy that is written into this knowledge, shows that it is not pluralism, but unity which is final. The unity of men is the final social meaning, dynamism or finality of the knowledge of God and of faith in God.

Towards this actional or practical goal of uniting men, the knowledge of God, faith in God and 'God' talk (religious language) serve as the myth, without our being aware of it. Human history seen from this socio-religious angle would be the vision of socio-religious unity and fellowship which religious language has effected between man and man, and between epoch and epoch. But the socio-religious unity effected by religious language is not a merely secular fellowship nor is this all that it affects; there is a sacred character in unity, in so far as that which motivates and sustains it is religious faith, i. e., the knowledge of God derived from the knowledge of oneself and of all else as creatures, creations and myths of an unmythical Being. Since the mythical existent cannot know the unmythical Being as it is in itself (only Being as equal and identical to itself can comprehend itself), it can only know, love and be united to Being

in its mythical or created manifestations, and the unity (there can be no identity) of the myth or the non-mythical would impart God's own uncreated sacred character to this unity as well.

The religious language which makes the socio-religious in history⁸ would seem to operate on the three planes of contemplation, action and devotion corresponding to the well known *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti margas* of Hinduism. Accordingly, religious language would fall into three distinct systems. The contemplative language system operates in and from the non-analogous and non-mythical, metaphysical sphere of Being in which there can be neither duality or relation or, consequently, personality. But in so far as it uses a language which is essentially mythical and analogous, as non-analogous and non-mythical it does violence to the whole nature of language. But this violence is the only alternative to silence. Such is the language of transcendence.

The language system of devotion operates in and from the mixed and historically qualified sphere of meta-historical Being which is therefore both one and many, absolute and relative, impersonal and personal. The language of devotion then is both analogous and non-analogous, mythical and non-mythical. It is the language of both transcendence and immanence.

The language system of sacred, ritual action operates in and from a sphere of sacrificial actions. While implying a metaphysical sphere of Being and non-being within whose historically manifestative realm sacred actions have their validity, the language of sacred action confines itself to the narrowly limited sacred contexts before which all non-ritual contexts become secular or profane, that is, indifferent to the holy, if not altogether opposed to it. Thus the language of sacral action differentiates itself from the language of day-to-day life as well as the languages of contemplation and devotion. It becomes the language of complete immanence :

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8. That language makes history and community is the unavowed assumption behind the Protestant theology of the word in general and Bultmanian theology of Christ living in the Kerygma in particular.

"Four are the grades of speech that have been measured; men of divine knowledge, who are wise, know them. Three of these are kept in secret and make no motion, people speak only the fourth grade of speech," says the *R̥g Veda*.⁹

If there are three systems of religious language, the Christian religious language – the language of the Bible as well as of Christian theology – would belong to these three classifications. Some of the prophetic 'God' talk in the Old Testament and the absolute Trinitarian theology in the Church is the language of transcendence which uses mythical language in a non-mythical fashion. Practically all the New Testament language as well as the language of Incarnational and Eschatological theology is the mixed language of transcendence and immanence, which employs the myth of language in both mythical and unmythical fashions. The language of ecclesiology and indeed of all sacramental theology is the language of practically unmixed immanence where the mythical nature of all language is either conveniently forgotten or exclusivised to sacramental language with the result that the mythical nature of the sacraments and of the Church and the mytho-historical character of dogmas is either lost sight of or else reluctantly accepted. The underlying reason for such reluctance is a diluted and popular, but wrong, notion of myth as falsehood or as fancy and fiction. But such a notion involves also a false conception of religious language in so far as it puts it on a plane wholly removed from the language of ordinary discourse, whereas religious language, by reason of the analogy of all language, must be seen in *relation* to language that is not professedly religious so that, for instance, 'sacred scripture' and 'secular history and literature' would not be as divergent realities as is often made out.

To conclude, we may with Rev. Taylor Stevenson¹⁰ draw three implications of the mythical nature of history (and language) for theology. a) Since facts are not neutral to interpretations which are themselves integral to any event, the discussion of de-mythologization which treat fact and interpretation as two different orders may need to be re-thought or abandoned.

9. 1,164,45. Quoted in *Four Dimensional Man* by Antonio T. de Nicolas, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1971, Chapter V.
10. *Cross Currents*. Ibid pp. 23–26

b) Since the objectivity of history is not apart from interpretations so that critical historiography is not the only form of history writing, but, rather, confessional history can also be objective, statements of fact and of faith, though distinct, are not mutually independent and opposed; and one can at once re-assess and participate in the events that are fundamental to the faith of one's community, which means that no assessment or statement of faith is final. "What is final is the 'resolute internalising of history' which commits us both to the perception of experience as objective historical events and to the incorporation into our understanding of the ceaseless waves of interpretation which emerge as, moving into the future, we return again and again to those historical events. In other words, the tentative or relative character of historical knowledge is not a fortuitous side-effect, but is built into the myth of history."¹¹ c) Since myths are historically confessional in character, the truth of historically oriented thought cannot be argued conclusively against any other or differently oriented thought, because for one thing such an attempt would introduce conflict and dialectic within Christian thought itself; and for another, one's theology or faith can only be confessed and enjoyed.

"Theology within the limits of the myth of history is to be confessed, lived and enjoyed; and, beyond this, because of the openness and orientation to the future which is so integral a part of the myth of history, no predetermined limits may be set as to the extent and ways in which a-historical understandings of experience may enrich our own. This is to say more than, for example, that Hinduism is a preliminary and provisional expression of truth. It is to say, rather, that within Hinduism we find an articulation of dimensions of truth which though implicit within the myth of history, we have never possessed, or which we have lost. To live within the myth of history is to be open to the possibility of experiencing all of history as grace."¹²

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I. Jesudasan

11. Ibid p. 26

12. Ibid

Faith and Belief in World Religions

The encounter of religions with national cultures is most clearly shown in the translation of faith into beliefs. Faith is the central reality of religion and it is also a characteristic quality or potentiality of human life. But it can be expressed and realized in actual life only through its application to the cultural situation in which one lives. This application produces particular beliefs. Thus faith and beliefs are intimately connected; but they are not identical. As concrete expressions in a cultural situation beliefs tend to get identified with the particularities of the cultural milieu, its traditional background, and immediate interests. Hence beliefs often tend to hide and obscure the authentic faith behind them. This is why every religion needs to go back to its original faith and constantly reform and renew itself. This tension between faith and belief is a phenomenon of every religion of humanity.

Faith is the most radical commitment of man to the ultimate concern of his life, and it is the core of religious life. To live religiously is not merely to live in the presence of certain symbols, but rather to be involved with them and through them in order to attain the ultimate that calls for man's total response, which affects man's relation to his whole environment. This relationship itself may be viewed from different angles. (1) It is, first of all, a challenge from the Supreme and absolute Reality calling for the unconditional submission of man in his whole being. (2) In reverse, faith is an act that affirms the existence of supernatural realities beyond the immediate experience of man and the limitations of his reason. (3) It shows man a way to get beyond the area of reason, through reasons of which reason knows nothing. (4) Faith respects and accepts the sacredness of a religious tradition in which an individual is placed and which gives him and his life a definite meaning. (5) It also criticizes that tradition inasmuch as it tends to become autonomous by itself, a secret gnosis, cutting off its relationship with the trans-

transcendental goal. (6) Faith is a judgment of the value of the whole universe and of every particular thing in it, in the light of that light that illumines all things. (7) It also goes beyond the particularities, divisions and sectarian polarities and prejudices of a particular situation and tries to reconcile them all in view of the common concerted orientation of faith. From this multivalent dynamism of faith there arise different beliefs that characterise religious traditions.

Faith and belief in the Hindu tradition

Hinduism was, in its origin, a vision, the vision of the Vedic sage who saw the boneless reality that supported the bony reality of the universe¹, that one which the poets described as many, the supreme *Vac*, three-fourths of which was hidden in mystery, and only one-fourth manifested in the visible creation. He saw the unity of the whole universe in its origin from the primal nothingness by the creative energy of the Lord of beings. For him man himself, a bundle of flesh, blood, bones and nerves, finds his life and meaning in the divine unity of the cosmic person.² Man's life has to be constantly inspired by *Rta*, the cosmic unity, to which he has recourse through *Sraddha* or faith.³

But this original vision of faith becomes concretized in the changing situations of the Indian sub-continent into which it was introduced. When the Aryans conquered the Indo-Gangetic plain they reduced the pre-Aryans to a sub-servient state and subordinated their divinities to the Aryan gods. They also achieved a synthesis of the religious values of the two religious traditions. The polite virtues and spiritual attitudes of the Aryan religious culture became integrated with the fertility cults and concrete physical emphasis of the Babylonian and Indus valley religious civilizations. In the next age emphasis on ritual worship, caste-structure of society and detailed legal prescriptions for moral life became the beliefs that expressed the Hindu faith in a concrete manner.

1. *RV* I, 164, 4.

2. *RV* X, 90.

3. *RV* X, 151; VII, 57, 12.

The Upaniṣadic period marks a return to the faith of the Vedas, but according to the particular modalities of the speculative bent of the Upaniṣadic sages. Faith was conceived as man's struggle to balance the demands of the Absolute *Atman* with the requirements of practical life,⁴ as a constant inquiry into the Eye of the eye, Ear of the ear, and Mind of the mind.⁵ Naciketas discovers the meaning of the life from the mouth of Death; sage Pippalada and his six disciples found the answers to their problems of life in ascetical austerities. These and other philosophical inquiries of the Upaniṣads and of the later systems are, in a certain sense, particular beliefs that are a far cry from the underlying faith.

In the encounter of Vedic Hinduism with the Dravidian religious traditions there is again a going back to the original faith and a new synthesis of basic religious values. The *Bhakti* movement that brought together the Hindu sages, Buddhist sadhus, Muslim sufis and Christian devotees into a uniform religious experience is a beautiful example of a phenomenon in which faith and belief were pleasantly harmonized. But soon beliefs broke loose and the idols which were intended as the focal points for gathering back the dissipated powers of the devotees became absolutes leading to superstitious cults. Even today Hindu religion oscillates between the pure understanding of the believer in the One without a second, and the compulsive ritualism of the sectarian fanatic who makes himself the slave of meaningless rubrics.

Faith and belief in Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, the Śakyamuni, started out as the seeker of true faith against the ritualism and caste hegemony of the Brahminical religion. After his enlightenment he went about preaching the faith of the noble truths: Life is suffering; this suffering arises out of desire; but this development of desire can be prevented; there are appropriate means for the attainment of this prevention. This basic realization of Buddha was the womb of Buddhist religion. It concentrates on the mind of man, beset with change and impermanence. The moment

4. *Isa Up.*

5. *Kena Up.*

alone is of supreme importance. "Life is a bridge – build no house upon it; a river – cling not to its banks nor to either of them; a gymnasium – use it to develop the mind on the apparatus of circumstance; a journey – take it and walk on."⁶ All forms of life are manifestations of one life and interrelated in a complete and incomprehensible web. Man himself is not an absolute; he does not contain a single permanent fact. Hence one has to walk the middle way, the path between the extremes of nihilism and absolutism seeing the relative value of one's life as a pilgrimage towards enlightenment. Hence the only reality is final enlightenment, the nature of which cannot be imagined, conceived or affirmed.

This original vision of Buddha was a non-philosophical, practical, moral and spiritual faith intelligible to the common man. But it was too tolerant a religion to retain its identity. As it gently flowed into country after country, whether of a higher or lower culture, it tended to adopt indigenous beliefs however crude. Hence in its developed form it is religion, philosophy, psychology, mysticism, magic and ritual. In each country it raised the indigenous culture. In Ceylon, Burma, Siam it exists side by side with the worship of nature spirits. In China and Japan it was transformed by the Confucian, Taoist and Shinto religions. In the beginning it was a popular movement. Soon it lost its original momentum, and for survival had to adopt popular worship of the written word. The different Buddhist sects show the impact of different cultural contexts and interests on the original faith.

Development of the Islamic faith

A faith very close to the culture of the people among whom it originated was Islam. The faith of Islam is in a sense summarized in the personality of Mohammed, who represented the aspirations of the Arab people squeezed between three mighty empires, Byzantine, Persian and Ethiopian. Expressing the attitude of the masses exploited by the wealthier classes in a mercantile town like Mecca he called for obedience to the law of God and tried to instil in every one fear of divine judgment. It was a

6. Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism*. p. 18.

simple faith that took into account the background and attitudes of a people leading a hard life in the desert. “*Islam*” itself is a verbal noun that implies “the act of submitting oneself” to the will of God through the performance of specified duties.⁷ It also means resignation to the will of God.⁸

But by the very circumstances of its origin Islam was a social religion that sought to bring order into a lawless nomadic society by imposing on it a strict religious structure. The foundation of this structure was the Qur’an, revealed to Mohammed. It was brought down from its place near God’s throne (97,1) to the lowest heaven (2, 181) and manifested piecemeal to Mohammed (25, 34). It contains the detailed legislation for the ordered life of a Muslim, who professed strict obedience to this law of faith. This original legislation was supplemented by Sunna or customs, reputed as interpretations given by Mohammed himself. These deal with legal provisions, religious obligations, such as prescribed prayers, fasting, alms, pilgrimage and the like. These two sources of religious beliefs were further extended by *ḥithad* or exertion, formation of a religious ruling by reasoning, and *qiyas* or reasoning by analogy. These structures were concrete expressions of the faith of Islam.

But these same structures and beliefs, particularized to the extreme, led to the emergence of different sects in Islam. Islamic religious culture, which spread very fast in Arabia, the whole Middle East, and North Africa, was rather short-lived. Over-emphasis on obedience to the law and the legal system with very little accent on philosophical thinking and theological reflection replaced the religious culture with political structures, the unity of which was short lived. Different Muslim rulers, including the Turks, Mughals, and Afghans, made use of Islamic law as a political instrument, with no concern for the original Islamic faith. Islam still continues as a religion, but the vision of a society constituted on the ideals of the Qur’an is nowhere realized. Society was controlled by the political forces which often tried to make use of religious sentiments for political ends, while the inner life of people was guided by the simple faith of Islam.

7. *Qur’an* 3, 17.

8. *Qur’an* 2, 106, 125.

Faith and dogma in Christianity

The tension between faith and the structures built up through centuries of beliefs is nowhere more evident than in Christianity. For Christianity is fundamentally a social religion primarily aiming at the reconstitution of human society fallen apart by the original sin of pride and disobedience. Christian religion is not for the sake of God nor merely for the salvation of the isolated individual, but for the reconciliation of the whole of humanity with God under the leadership of Christ: the Word of God made flesh. Since this message was so fundamentally sociological its faith had to be concretely expressed in particular contexts. For the immediate disciples of Christ, Christianity was not a set of principles and injunctions, but Christ himself, what Christ said and did, his preaching, miracles, suffering, death and resurrection for the salvation of all men. When they communicated the Gospel or good news of salvation their preaching was conditioned by the particular needs of the actual community. To the Jews they announced the fulfilment of the promise of Yahweh, the one God of the Old Testament, realized in the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ, whom they had, by their malice, crucified. Only in the name of Jesus could they obtain salvation.⁹ When the same message was presented to the non-Jewish sections, it was the 'good news' to everyone from a God who had no partiality. This "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power"; when he was killed by the Jews, was raised up from the dead and made judge over all.¹⁰ When the communities became established their faith also became articulated in a systematic way, reflecting the organization of the community. The four Gospels and the epistles written by the apostles to the different Churches reflect the liturgical and social structure of the particular Church for which the document was produced.

When the Christian Faith moved out into the well-organized and culturally-developed Graeco-Roman world it had to face different philosophico-religious traditions and thought-patterns. Expressing and explaining the faith in this new context was fraught with danger. Certain interpretation in the light of these

9. *Acts* 2: 31-39; 3: 12-26; 4: 8-12.

10. *Acts* 10: 34-43.

new philosophies threatened the very foundations of faith like the divinity and unique personality of Christ himself. Here particular beliefs threatened faith. When the Councils grappled with new theories and opinions their method was to go back to the simple original faith in order to judge the orthodoxy of the new interpretations. Positions incompatible with that basic faith were condemned as heresies.

Faith and belief in East and West

In this tension between faith and belief there is a fundamental difference between the religions of East and West. For the Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, Faith is basically a matter of personal experience. Beliefs which are social expressions of that inner experience are secondary. When the emphasis shifts from the inner realization to the outward religious cult and common beliefs we have the decadent condition of religion. In Western religions, especially Judaism and Christianity, religion is a covenant of God with humanity. Man comes to being as a child of the human family and he attains his supernatural rebirth in the same family. An individual is saved not in isolation but as a member of the reconstituted human family.

Hence the function of faith in Christianity and other Western religions is not merely to provide a personal and intimate experience of the divine to the individual but to open him fully to the human situation. He has to become aware not only of the God "up there" and within the cave of the heart, but also of human history and other men, of the socio-political and religious-cultural milieu, all of which constitute the total medium through which God approaches him. Even in the Eastern religions, with the increasing awareness of the importance of human society, the material world and history, the idea of an isolated sanctity for the individual has become untenable. Man has to discover God in other people and in the world. These are not mere dead and cold mirrors either, they are not mere reflections of the one Absolute in spite of the individual limitations they impose on the supreme. Each one of them must be accepted in its uniqueness as presenting a special word and message from the transcendent and incomprehensible reality of God. Hence St John is able to say

that he who says "I love God" whom he does not see and hates his brother whom he sees, is a liar.¹¹

Faith and unbelief

In this orientation of faith to the concrete situations of life several dimensions may be discerned. Faith can be alive only if it responds to all the challenges presented by life situations, which have been briefly indicated at the beginning of this essay. In a contest of rationalism which demands an explanation of all the supernatural facts from the light of reason, faith is a humble obedience to the self-revealing act of God. Here faith seeks an understanding of the dialectics by which reason, purified of its pride, rises to a mystical union with God. Where naturalism and scientism are the fashion the task of faith is to show that there is a world of meaningful realities beyond what nature and science can attain by themselves. Thus faith must perfect reason.

On the other hand there are also situations where people are carried away by a certain scepticism and religious indifference, and want to pitch their tents in the streets of the secular city. No exit may be apparent from such a veritable hell. There the function of faith is to guide the human mind in discovering its own resources, the inmost craving of the heart for the infinite reality with reasons of which reason knows nothing. Here the function of faith is to form the mind. But when it becomes blinded by a secular gnosis, a worldly wisdom that creates its own golden calf for worship, faith must be an axe to cut down the idols erected in the place of the true God. Thus St Paul preaches the wisdom of the Cross, of Jesus crucified "a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles."¹² In this case faith crucifies reason.

But today, unbelief is rampant in the social sphere, where race is set against race, class against class. There is a relativism which glorifies conflicts. The only way for correcting existing

11. *1 Jn.* 4: 20.

12. *1 Cor.* 1: 22.

evils is shown to be emphasis on hatred so that dominating forces may be dominated. Here faith must come in as a power of reconciliation that unites the many relative perspectives and thwarts ideological conflicts. Faith must enable man to rise above absolutist positions to a redemptive reality and oppose the separation of man from man.

Faith will be valid only if it opposes the unbelief that besets the particular situation. If it obstructs the prevailing situation it will be an irrelevant ideology.¹³ This indicates the basic reason for the failure of religious movements in the past. A particular religious movement had a mission when it opposed a particular unbelief of the times. But when times changed and the unbelief itself disappeared the movement failed to change its direction and generate the right kind of beliefs. Thus a faith that was quite efficient against the Rationalism, Naturalism, and Materialism of the last century has been quite irrelevant in the face of the contemporary relativism that divided man against class. A man who exploits pitilessly his employees may pose today as a believer professing loudly a creed that was formulated against the Averroist materialism of the 13th century. Humanists of today successfully attack the faith of believers because it is so out of tune with the times as to be totally oblivious of the actual problems of today.¹⁴

Conclusion

Every religion has to translate its faith into particular beliefs in its encounter with the concrete situations of life. Eastern religions that lay the emphasis on personal experience and realization regard their beliefs as secondary and peripheral to the religious concern. But in the contemporary situation, in which the socio-political reality of human existence is in the forefront of human consciousness and satisfaction of man's material needs is the burning preoccupation of everyone, any religion that cannot

13. Herbert W. Richardson, *The Nature of Unbelief*, *Continuum* 5 (1967) 106-118.

14. E. Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, New York; Sheed and Ward, 1969, pp. 50-57.

give a meaningful approach to these aspects of human life will be judged irrelevant.

Western religions on the other hand tend to remain stuck in beliefs that were formulated against the unbelief of a bygone age. Hence they too stand accused of a lack of concern for the burning problems of man today, and of a faith in God cut away from the necessary love of this world.¹⁵ So they have to regain a sense of their mission and to reconstitute human society in the light of the universal message of salvation. This they can do only by focusing their faith upon the actual situation of humanity and fighting the unbelief that is gripping human minds. Religious beliefs need continuous renewal in order that faith may be preserved, intact and living.

John B. Chethimattam

15. Ignace Lepp. *The Faith of Men*, New York, Macmillan, 1967 pp. 21-23.

Authenticity in Confucian Spirituality

Among the distinctive aspects of Confucian teaching is its insistence on personal authenticity: *ch'eng*, a word that is frequently translated as 'sincerity'. This word does not appear among the traditional virtues of the Confucian tradition which are: *jen* (humanity), *i* (righteousness), *li* (proper behaviour), *chih* (knowledge), *hsin* (loyalty). The reason that *ch'eng* is not listed among the basic virtues is because it is, itself, the supposition of all virtues. Hence it must be considered along with *jen* (humanity), *ching* (reverence), *hsiao* (filial piety), as a meta-virtue. These are the primordial foundations of the Confucian life-attitude, the basis of all human values, the essential elements of the 'wisdom' aspect of this tradition. *Jen* appears both among the virtues and the meta-virtues since it has a twofold quality, one as the supreme all pervading foundation of virtue, the other as a specific virtue providing the foundations of the affective life of the Chinese people.

This emphasis on *ch'eng* indicates how conscious the Confucian tradition was of authentic and inauthentic modes of human existence. If the supreme achievement of the Indian personality is liberation from the bonds of the phenomenal order into identity with Brahman or escape into the realm of *nirvana*, if the supreme achievement of the Christian is redemptive transformation in Christ, the supreme achievement of the Chinese is complete authenticity as a human being. Thereby man is established in his identity with himself, in his relations with the total human community, and beyond that in his identity with both the cosmic and divine orders. By authenticity man participates in the functioning of the universal order of things.

Fundamental to this emphasis on authenticity is the Confucian insistence that each thing has a specific nature as its identifying feature. Everything has its own *hsing*, its own proper

nature. Because this nature is heaven-bestowed it has, deep within its very being, a heaven-presence. In the case of man this heaven-presence felt within the very core of man's being establishes the ultimate basis for his authentic mode of existence. The more immediate basis, however, is the *hsing*, this nature itself.

In developing his authentic existence man must pass through a dialectical process of realization. After an early period of naive self-identity men undergo a period of self-alienation: they lose their authenticity. This requires that they undergo a process of recovery and further interior cultivation until they attain re-establishment in their own reality. The loss of authenticity is designated as losing the 'original mind', the 'original nature', the 'mind of the child', or the integrity of the 'heavenly endowed nature'. As Mencius tells us, the object of all teaching and self-cultivation is the recovery of the 'lost mind'. The tragedy is that while men generally know how to search for their chickens and goats when they are lost, men do not know how to seek for their own mind when this is lost. This must be done by a process of learning and consistent self-cultivation. Learning in the Confucian context corresponds to what people in the West would call interior spiritual development. Far from being an abstract analytical process, it is rather a way of being in a fully human manner, without destructive desires, without selfishness, without seeking fame, without doing violence to oneself in some form of asceticism. Above all it expresses itself in the conduct of life, in the external manifestation of an interior attitude. The one real hope of man lies in the inner dynamics of his own nature.

As a self-perfecting reality, nature is of itself profoundly orientated in the basic directions of its development. Without this inner dynamic men would indeed be lost and have no reliable norm for their activities. With this inner direction men need only respond to these inner drives, and the mystery hidden within reveals itself. The one great need is a sensitivity that enables a person to recognize those inner promptings that emerge from the depths of his being. Development of this sensitivity is the entire point of Confucian spiritual teaching. Whenever a fault occurs, a man must not look to some outside cause to blame; he must look inward at his own mind and examine himself

until he discovers wherein he may have failed. Only after a thorough self-critique, when he finds no fault, should he consider placing the blame on some cause extrinsic to himself. The constant amount of failure in life requires that this inner self-awareness be always maintained. There must be a daily renewal of life, a daily rectification of what has become distorted in a person's development (*The Great Learning*, ch. 2).

An original endowment which requires development throughout the entire course of man's life, this nature has only its root form until, through the life development of a person, it comes to its proper fulfilment. The basic obligation of man is to perfect his nature. When this is accomplished he attains a complete interior spontaneity in his actions. That these actions accord with his nature, that they are spontaneous in the most profound sense of the word, that they are in harmony with all his social relationships, all this depends on the authentic character of his being. The entire Confucian civilization was centered on achieving this authenticity. The simplest thing in the world it was yet the most difficult, the thing that men missed most often, although it was so obvious.

The *t'ien ming*, the providential disposition of heaven itself, has to be internalized so that a man thinks, speaks and acts with complete spontaneity. This spontaneity we find is the final accomplishment of Confucius as indicated in that superb autobiography contained in a mere thirty-eight words (in Chinese text): "At fifteen I set my mind on learning. At thirty I was well established. At forty I had no doubts. At fifty I understood the decrees of heaven. At sixty my ears were responsive. At seventy I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing the proper norms of conduct" (*Analekts* 2.4). This final achievement of freedom within the normal range of human activities is grounded in that total authenticity to which heaven and earth, as well as Confucius, had set their hand. A similar spontaneity is found in Mencius where he tells us: "The great man does not first consider his speech to make it sincere or his deeds to make them correct, he simply speaks and acts in a straightforward manner and these qualities are already there." (Mencius, 4BII) "Whoever possesses sincerity does the right thing without strain or effort, he understands without thought; the sage indeed is one who with ease

and spontaneity follows the right path.” (*Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20) Later Confucian thinkers considered that Yen Tzu (one of the disciples of Confucius) was not fully perfected in his interior life because he had to think before he understood properly and had to deliberate before knowing just what was correct. Such a person has not yet been completely transformed into goodness. He had not yet become a fully authentic personality. Nor did he yet know the joy indicated by Mencius: “There is nothing so delightful as to be aware of personal authenticity when examining oneself.” (7A.4)

To be an authentic person is to be constantly transformed in one’s own being toward an ever more human self-expression. The person who has achieved this self-transformation also has the power of transforming others; he enters into the creative dynamics of the universe. Thus in the greatest of all Chinese treatises on authenticity, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, we read: “Only the person with supreme authenticity can completely fulfil his nature; perfecting his own nature, he can perfect the natures of other men. Able to perfect the natures of other men he can bring about the perfection of the natures of living beings and all other things. Able to do this, he is able to participate in the transforming and nourishing forces of heaven and earth. Able to assist in such transforming powers he forms with heaven and earth a third.” (ch. 22)

This total efficacy associated with authenticity indicates that this virtue brings man into the higher realms of being. In a special manner it brings about an intersection of the divine, cosmic and human planes of reality. It also establishes a person at the cosmic centre. The resulting transforming of things is the expression of what is deepest in the reality of things, for only by virtue of a higher transformation do things achieve their real being, their authentic expression.

So important is authenticity that it can be said: “Authenticity is the fulfilment as well as the primordial origin of things, apart from authenticity there is nothing.” (*Doctrine of the Mean*; 25. 2) This brings us back to the question of identity, of singleness. From authenticity comes singleness, from singleness comes the ordinances of heaven and their unceasing influences. It is

thus that 'heaven is heaven' (DM, 26/10), and manifests the authentic mode of its own being.

In relation to the human order it is especially important that authenticity distinguishes those endowed with social responsibility: "Because the dispositions of the ruler are rooted in his own person" (29/3), those who would guide others must manifest this authenticity in the very structure of their personality. When a ruler with this total integrity arises, "his activities become a norm for future ages, his deeds are ever after a law for the kingdom, his speech is for generations a guide for the people" (DM, 29/5).

When this virtue of sincerity reaches its supreme expression, there comes the higher spiritual experience, participation in super-human powers: "Only such an authentic person can adjust the great abiding relations of mankind, establish the great foundations of mankind, and know the transforming work of heaven and earth." (DM, 32/1) For such a person there is nothing on which he can depend; everything depends on him. "So sincere his humanity, so profound his depth, so vast and all-embracing, he is heaven itself." (DM, 32/2) No one can know or understand such a man except one who is "alert in perception, clear in judgment, of wide understanding and possessed of divine virtue" (DM, 32/3). The person who attains such eminence keeps himself hidden. The very authenticity he has attained requires that he should remain true to the simple and ordinary ways of life, that he should not become a "professional" holy man. Inner wisdom is not shown on the outside, it is kept hidden within. Not imposed on the people, it is simply recognized by them. In this way he imitates heaven itself, for "the activities of heaven are without sound or smell; this is in truth perfect virtue" (32/3).

It is important to realize that this doctrine of authenticity was developed by the Chinese out of an extensive experience of the inauthentic in human life. The literature of China is filled with the story of human tragedy, of personality disintegration, of oppression, as well as of heroic virtue and a profound and all-pervading humanity. The Chinese at an early time realized the perilous situation of man, the narrow margin of man's sur-

vival in the truly human order, the need for sustained and vigorous effort to evoke from man a valid and authentic expression of himself if he was not to relapse into a barbarity from which he might never recover. This doctrine of authentic humanity was thus a salvation doctrine for the Chinese. It was also a programme for their highest spiritual attainment. It was rooted in the painful awareness of misery that men inflict upon themselves and upon each other and the difficulties of establishing a satisfactory order in human society.

There can be no doubt that China had its full share of the dark and inhuman, the vicious, the demonic. At times this was so severe that men fled the responsibilities of social order and sought rest and relief as retired scholars or as monks hidden in the distant mountains. All the same the Confucian scholars, sages and poets consistently taught that human life could not only be managed in a successful and satisfying way but that it could be spiritually transformed into an exalted experience of sublime dimensions that fully rivalled the higher processes of life-formation found in the other major societies of the Eurasian world. If the spiritual qualities of Confucian humanism are still not fully appreciated it is largely because men have not yet come to appreciate the full values of that authentic human existence toward which the spiritual effort of Confucian tradition was directed. The final achievement was an integral experience of the total presence of the divine, the cosmic and the human to each other in a trinity wherein man was the third and unifying element.

Thomas Berry

Dialogical Standpoint Illustrated by the Caste-System

The Pastoral Context

"Look at the human degradation and social injustices caused by the caste-system. And this system is part and parcel of the Hindu religion. Only an arm-chair theologian can make airy pronouncements about the role of Divine Providence in religions of this sort." This is what a learned Christian social worker among the Harijans said in a discussion on inter-religious dialogue. Indeed, if we open our eyes to the villages and towns of India we cannot fail to see the horrifying reality of casteism. It was just five years ago that a number of Harijans were burned alive in Tamilnadu by the highcaste landlords.¹ No wonder then, that a western scholar like Sherring wrote in his *Hindu Tribes and Castes* that the caste "is the most baneful and hard-hearted and cruel social system that could possibly be invented for damning the human race."² But is this the only way of looking at casteism?

Some years ago the Sankaracharya of Puri, a man of high moral integrity and intellectual calibre, declared that the 'caste-system' is an essential part of Hinduism and ought to be defended. Of course, this apparently unenlightened statement caused waves of protests in many parts of India. But if we look into the sacred books of Hinduism like the *R̥gveda* (x: 90: 12), the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad* (1: 4: 12), the *Gīta* (IV: 13) and the *Manusmṛti* (1: 31), one may come to the conclusion that the 'caste-system' is an integral part of Hinduism, and so the Sankaracharya was doing nothing more than performing his duty as the head of the Hindu community. It is beyond dispute that Gandhiji has been one of the greatest champions of the under-

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1. Cfr. *Times Weekly*, 15th July, 1973.
 2. Quoted by P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1963, vol. II, p. 21

privileged and the downtrodden. But he said: "As years go by, the conviction is daily growing upon me that *varṇa* (usually translated and understood as caste) is the law of man's being and therefore as necessary for Christianity and Islam as it has been for Hinduism, and has been its saving."³ Is it the same reality which we condemn in the name of caste? If different, is the difference only a question of the objective understanding of the issue or also a question of the attitude with which we approach it?

Some remarks on the procedure

This essay is not intended to be a defence of casteism but rather to point out how an apparently indefensible socio-religious institution like caste can be seen in a very different light if we adopt the 'dialogical'⁴ standpoint. And it is emphatically held that this can be done without in any way compromising the basic Christian commitment. It is, rather, its expression.

Although the question of caste, is somewhat extensively treated, it is used as an illustration to point out that in order to understand existentially, i.e. from the point of view of the non-Christians themselves, some of their religious institutions, attitudes or doctrines like atheism, pessimism, idolatry, and intolerance, we have to adopt the dialogical standpoint. It must however be remembered that in Indian logic, illustrations are not extrinsic to argumentation as in the Aristotelian logic but its essential constituent. That is why *udāharaṇa* (illustration) is one of the five steps of the Indian syllogism.⁵ And so the scholastic axiom 'Illustration does not prove', does not hold good in the Indian context. The extensive use of illustrations and anecdotes may appear somewhat naive to one trained in the

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3. *My Varṇāśrama Dharma*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, 1965, p. 42.
 4. From the point of view of grammar this adjectival use may be questionable. Since no better term can be found, this term has already been used by certain theologians and the specific meaning we have in mind is explained. Hence there seems to be some justification in this use.
 5. (Cfr. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966, p. 75)

Western way of thinking, but our particular situation and need seem to justify such a style.

First, the meaning of 'dialogical standpoint' will be explained taking examples from our pastoral situation. Then a few of the fallacies implied in our negative judgements regarding some of the socio-religious institutions of the non-Christians like that of the caste-system will be brought to light. The points to be put across are ordinary and common-place, but as such they are often taken for granted with great harm to the cause of inter-religious dialogue.

I

The Dialogical standpoint

The Commitment dimension of religion

"My mother may be ill-mannered and ugly. But no other person can be her adequate substitute. Hinduism is my mother." This statement of a collegian, made in an inter-religious gathering, can awaken us to an all-important and oft-neglected dimension of religion which makes it 'mine' or 'ours', and that this dimension is far more important for the speaker than the one which consists of doctrines and rites which are observable through the senses so that they could be objects of scientific investigation.

How can we interpret this illustration? The collegian admits that his mother in the eyes of an impartial observer may be ill-mannered and ugly. He may have even come to know by comparing her with other ladies that they are prettier and more qualified in various fields than she is. But his filial commitment establishes an irreplaceable relation between him and her, and his filial love makes him see her imperfections in a very different light from the one in which an impartial observer would see them. He, therefore, wants us to know that unless we understand and experience, from his own point of view, his loyalty to Hinduism, we will not be able to appreciate what his religion means for him only by a phenomenological, extrinsic study of it.

In fact one of the greatest drawbacks of the discipline of Comparative Religion has been that many of the scholars looked upon religion more or less in the same way as a biochemist *qua*

biochemist would look at the personal reality of what a mother is. Many of these scholars would maintain that only a religious agnostic would be qualified to do the objective study of religions since he alone would be impartial.⁶ They seem to forget that religion is not primarily a matter of doctrines and rituals but of personal commitment. Just as no woman exists except as a mother, sister, wife, daughter and the like, so too no religion exists except as something to which persons are attached. To study a religion independently of this commitment dimension is somewhat like the post-mortem analysis of a human corpse. In inter-religious dialogue we have to meet the living reality that the religions are not their corpses.

In India great personalities like the Emperor Ashok, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Gandhiji compared religions with great enrichment to their own religions as well as to their religious life, unlike modern scholars with their un-productive study of Comparative Religion. The difference seems to lie in the fact that whereas modern scholars under the influence of the methodology used by empirical science approach religions as being like any other material phenomenon, these great religious reformers approached the religions of others as living personalistic realities and therefore had access to their commitment dimension.

What has been stated about the 'commitment' dimension of religion can be further elucidated in terms of what Dr Panikkar says about viewing the religions of others from within. He says:

There is in existence a conception of the science of religions which is drained of life, sterilised, one might say, and constantly liable to stop short at the level of phenomenon – a conception that consists in viewing these religions simply and solely as historical data judged with reference to their cultural manifestations. The result of this is to identify in practice a given religion with its sociological form, i. e. with the 'clothing' it assumes in history in a

6. Dr R. C. Zaehner briefly discusses this question in his *The Comparison of Religions*, Boston: Bacon Press, 1962, p. 12 ff.

particular milieu... Penetration 'within' then, is highly essential if there is to be an authentic science of religions and an adequate discernment of spirits.⁷

From the point of view of Christian theology, both traditional and contemporary, in the consideration of religions (both in its personal, or private, and in its collective, or social, forms), this dimension is of great importance. In Christian thinking loyalty to one's conscience, right or erroneous, has been and still is given primary importance. Aquinas could say: "If one professes faith in Christ or the Church when he has come to the conviction that it is wrong, then he sins against his conscience."⁸ The declaration of Vat. II that an atheist in good conscience can be saved is a clear proof that Christian theology gives greater importance to the subjective attitude to one's faith than to its objective content.⁹ If we examine the Bible we will realize that the saving truth in the Bible is not merely the truth in the scholastic sense of the term (*adequatio intellectus ad rem*) but rather truthfulness or loyalty, whose Hebrew equivalent is *emet*.¹⁰

Dialogue as an expression of love

One of the most satisfying descriptions of inter-religious dialogue is the one given by the all-India seminar for church renewal, held in Bangalore. The seminar declares:

In dialogue, we Christians seek to share with the adherents of other religions our experience of God. Partners in dialogue are wholly open to each other, and learn from each other, and giving their best truly enrich each other, and move together towards an ever fuller realisation of the Ultimate Mystery. Thus understood, dialogue is an act of love of God

7. *The Trinity and World Religions*, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1970, p. 1.
8. Quoted in *Dutch Catechism*, p. 374.
9. Cfr. L. G. 16; G. S. 19-21. Cfr. also, Rahner, K. "The Teaching of Second Vatican Council on Atheism", *Concilium* III, 3 March 1967, p. 5.
10. For a detailed study cfr. Loretz Oswald, *The Truth of the Bible*, London; Burns and Oates, 1964)

and of neighbour and part of our service to religion and to truth.¹¹

The key statement of this document is that dialogue is an act of love of God and of our neighbour. The other statements are the explicitations of the implicit elements in love. According to Erich Fromm "In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two".¹² According to this author one of the implicit elements of love is mutual respect, an attitude which makes one look at the other as he is and view things from his standpoint.¹³ Because love implies not only unity but also distinction, this respect is called for. Because love implies unity there is the question of common search, mutual sharing and enrichment, and mutual self-giving.

A person cannot be known realistically, existentially, unless he is loved. According to Fromm, to know a person "on his own terms", getting into "his inner core" is an aspect of love.¹⁴ The author shows yet another way in which love and knowledge fuse into one. After describing the innate inclination in man to know the 'secret' of the other he says: "The other path to knowing the 'secret' is love. Love is the active penetration of the other person' in which my desire to know is stilled by union."¹⁵ If we accept that genuine dialogue is an act of love and if we undertake such a dialogue with a person it is not difficult to have some insight into the various aspects of his religious commitment from his own standpoint.

Conclusion

If we look at a religion existentially, realistically, we cannot fail to see that it has cognitional as well as commitment dimensions. However it is quite natural for a religious-minded person to take both of these dimensions of his own religion seriously while over-looking the 'commitment' dimension of the

11. *Church in India Today*, C. B. C. I. Centre, New Delhi, 1969, p. 257.

12. *The Art of Loving*, New York: Bantam Book, 1970, p. 17.

13. *Ibid.* p. 22

14. *Ibid.* p. 24

15. *Ibid.* p. 25

religions of others. The way left for us to get into the commitment dimension of the religions of others, without compromising our own religious commitment, is the one of genuine love for the partners in dialogue. Once we get into this dimension of the religions of others through love it is not very difficult to have an insight into their religion from their own standpoint. *In brief we may say that from the dialogical stand-point we view the non-Christians with genuine love entering deeper and deeper into their inner selves to experience for ourselves what they love and experience in their religious commitment, and invite them to see and experience what we deeply love and experience in our Christian commitment thereby being led to mutual enrichment.*

II

Caste-system from the dialogical point of view

Once a Hindu professor remarked that the murder of the Jewish millions during the second world war was the most heinous crime perpetrated by Christianity since the time of the Crusades. Any committed Christian would sense something wrong in this statement. The professor explained his reason for making this remark by pointing out that the vast majority of Germans were Christians (i. e. the Baptized) and this crime was committed by them. Another Hindu professor opposed him saying that Nazism as a political reality had nothing to do with Christianity. He went on to confirm his argument by adducing such facts as the attack by the Christian nations on the anti-Jewish Nazi policies in spite of their long-standing anti-Semitic tradition and the welcome offered to the Jewish refugees by the Christian leaders especially by the Pope. Both of these professors argued on the basis of 'objective data', but they arrived at different conclusions because the latter had been engaged in Hindu-Christian dialogue for quite some time while the former had been at best indifferent to Christianity. The latter's knowledge was fused with an element of love as is expected of the dialogical standpoint.

We began this essay with certain negative, one-sided views on the caste-system. What would have been the reaction of a committed and educated Hindu like the Sankaracharya of Pur when he heard of such views. He could very well give expression

to his reaction in these words: "Caste is a sociological concept which has very little to do with the religious concept *varṇāśrama* to which alone the *sanatanadharma* is responsible. In *varṇāśrama* itself there are *predeterministic* and *idealistic* trends which have to be understood according to the particular historical and geographical situation of the subcontinent. In the idealistic trend of the *varṇāśrama* one could distinguish between the *character-ideal* and the *harmony-ideal*, both of which are acceptable with certain adaptations even in this enlightened era of social consciousness." In this section it will be shown how these statements have objective foundations although legitimately coloured by the 'commitment' dimension of Hinduism, and so, could be accepted by one who is serious about dialogue.

1) In caste and *varṇāśrama dharma* there are only four *varṇas* as the name *cāturvarṇyam* (the system of the fourfold *varṇas*) itself indicates, although there are numerous castes and sub-castes.¹⁶ The *Rgveda* (x: 90: 12), *Vajasaneya Samhita* of the *Yajurveda* (31: 11), the *Bṛhadaraniaka Upaniṣad* (I: 4: 12), the *Gita* (ix: 13), *Manusmṛti* (I: 31: x: 45) and most of the *Dharmaśāstras* uphold only four *varṇas*. Hence Dr Srinivasa says: "The facts of caste life seen through the *varṇa* model have distorted the existing facts. It is absolutely necessary for the sociologist to free himself from the hold of the *varṇa* model if he wishes to understand the caste system."¹⁷

The pre-deterministic and idealistic varnasrama

a) The pre-deterministic trend

According to this trend in Hindu ethics, a man's *varṇa* is determined by hereditary factors, but this cannot be defended convincingly on the basis of the *Sruti* literature or on the basis of historical evidence of the life of the Vedic society. The effects

16. Cfr. N. M. Srinivas, *Dr. Wadia Lectures*, M. S. University, Baroda "Varna and Caste", p. 359,

17. Ibid. p. 360.

18. Cfr. Majumdar, *History of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, p. 390 ff.

of the *anuloma*¹⁹ and *pratiloma*²⁰ marriages described in some of the later *Dharmaśāstras* show it. According to some of the *Dharmaśāstras* the offspring of an *anuloma* marriage retain the caste of the father and according to some others they retain the caste of the mother, and the offspring of a *pratiloma* marriage becomes an outcaste (*patita*)²¹

b) The idealistic trend

According to this trend it is either the special skill of an individual in fulfilling the particular needs of the social organism (the harmony ideal), or the character and conduct of the individual, that determines his caste

(i) The harmony ideal

Gandhiji says: "The law of *varṇa* is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning his livelihood."²² But how can the following statement that "there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority",²³ be compatible with this? If a Brahmin's son will always remain a Brahmin and if the Brahmin caste is superior to all the other castes how could Gandhiji say that there was no inherited superiority? The reason is that according to this trend it is the skill of an individual to fulfil the needs of the social organism that determines his caste. In an organic theory of society the concept of hierarchy is not so important as in other theories. The *Puruṣa Sūkta* reference to the origin of caste in the *Rgveda* (X: 90: 12) foreshadows this trend. It is well brought out in the *Bṛhadarāṇiaka Upaniṣad* (I: 4: 11-15). Radhakrishnan comments on this passage: "Society requires in addition to wisdom, power and wealth, service and work. Wisdom conceives the order, power sanctions and enforces it, wealth and production provide means for carrying out the order, and work carries it out. These are the different functions

19. The marriage of a male of the higher *varṇa* with a female of the lower *varṇa*.

20. The marriage of a male of a lower *varṇa* with the female of a higher *varṇa*.

21. Cfr. K. H. Dh. vol. II, p. 55 ff.

22. *My Varnasrama Dharma*, p. 51

23. *Ibid.* p. 37.

essential for a normal well-ordered society. These distinctions are found among both gods and men.”²⁴ Prof. Ghurye, on the basis of the data gathered through field work, shows that this ideal has been, and still, is to some extent, operative in Hindu Society.²⁵

(ii) **The character-ideal**

The story of Satyakama described in the *Chandogya Upaniṣad* well brings out this idea (IV: 4:5). Satyakama, the bastard son of a servant maid goes to a Bhramin sage named Gautama with a desire for wisdom. When he was asked about his *gotra* (family) he told the truth. Pleased with his truthfulness the guru said: “None but the *Brahmaṇa* could thus explain. Bring the fuel, my dear. I will receive you as a pupil. Thou has not departed from the truth.” Gīta IV: 13 and IX: 4: 32, could be interpreted in this way. According to *Bhāgavat Purāṇa* (VII: 19: 10) a *chandāla* who is a devotee of *Viṣṇu* is superior to a *Brāhmaṇa* who is not a devotee. Kane proves this point on the basis of some relevant *Mahabharata* statements:

Shanti 188:10 says ‘There is no real distinction between the varṇas (since) *it was* formerly created by Brahma, and *has* had the system of varṇas on account of the various actions (of men)! Shanti (189:4 and 8) avers ‘that man is known as *brahmaṇa* in whom are seen truthfulness, generosity, absence of wickedness, shame (restraint for avoiding wrongdoing), compassion and a life of austerity; if these signs are observed in a *śudra* and not found in *brāhmaṇa* the *śudra* is not a *śudra* (should not be treated as a *śudra*) and the *brāhmaṇa* is not a *brāhmaṇa*.’²⁶ A similar passage occurs in *Vanaparva* 216:14 and 15.²⁷

24. *The Principal Upanishads*, London: Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1968, p. 170.

25. *Caste and Class in India*, Bombay: The Popular Depot, 1950, p. 27.

26. Cfr. Kane. H. Dh. Vol. V, p. 1636.

27. *Ibid*, Vol. 5, p. 1642.

It goes without saying that this study is not meant to give an exhaustive list of various trends in Hindu ethics with regard to *varnāśrama* or to give them a conclusive treatment. This brief sketch however seems to be sufficient to bring out the complexities of the reality usually expressed by the term caste-system.

III

Certain fallacies highlighted by the dialogical stand-point

1. The anachronistic fallacy

By this concept we mean the error of making evaluational judgements on a phenomenon of the ancient past by using the standards of a later period in history. Let us take for example the predeterministic trend in *varṇāśrama*. If we believe in the basic principles of vocational guidance, we have to admit that it is the aptitude of a man that should determine the choice of his profession. Nowadays nobody will object if the son of a carpenter becomes a doctor.

Let us look at the situation of the ancient world or even of the age of the pre-industrial revolution. How did a carpenter learn his craft? Did he go to some industrial school? Most probably he learned it in his father's workshop. In saying this we do not deny other possibilities however exceptional they might have been.

It is generally held that the factors that influence the formation of tastes and inclinations are heredity and environment. Among the environmental factors those of the family have pride of place. In society today where there are numerous occupations and professions from which one can choose regardless of one's caste or creed, an individual can easily come to know that the profession for which he has an aptitude, need not be that of his ancestors. In spite of this, in certain families there have been generations of doctors, advocates or teachers. Such is the influence of the family on an individual in the choice of an occupation.

In the ancient world there were far fewer external factors to make an individual choose an occupation different from that of his ancestors. A carpenter's son grew up in the environment of his father's workshop and his father took pride in training him progressively in the use of more and more sophisticated tools, and the son assimilated the tastes and inclinations of his father. To this we must add the tyrannical influence which the family, clan and guild had on an individual, in contrast to the relatively looser ties which bind the modern man to his immediate surroundings. Hence, when Gandhiji said that "A hundred years ago, a carpenter's son never wanted to be a lawyer,"²⁸ he did have a point although it looks like a sweeping generalization.

In judging the rites, theologies and institutions of other religions awareness of this fallacy is of great importance. In course of time many of the institutions of a religion may become very irrelevant but an abrupt abolition of such institutions is not an easy task, for, old habits die hard.

2. The fallacy of highlighting the dismembered facts

Ordinarily we judge the character of a great historical figure like Augustine or Sankaracharya on the basis of the authentic records of their words (books, sermons, letters, conversations and the like) and deeds. Apart from the fact that it is practically impossible to have the records of all the words and deeds of a person, a biographer usually chooses only some recorded words and deeds in so far as they corroborate or substantiate the judgements he might have already made on the character of the person. Such a choice of facts is expected, and to that extent it is legitimate. But this partial choice of facts becomes unfair when a biographer refuses to take seriously certain other facts which might neutralize or even contradict the facts chosen to suit his theory. Thus, for instance, a biographer on the basis of the authentic records of the words and deeds of Hitler and Gandhiji can succeed in showing that the former was one of the greatest benefactors of humanity and the latter was

28. Ibid. p. 108.

a great destroyer of world peace. The fallacy here lies not in the inauthenticity of the chosen records but in the highlighting of certain dismembered factors from an organic whole of facts. This fallacy will be less intense when this choice is made without malice. In modern times Pope Pius XII was pathetically victimized by this fallacy through the book, *The Vicar*. Some other notorious examples of this fallacy are, Louis Molles' film on India, and Catherine Mayo's books, *The Slaves of the Gods*, and *Mother India*.

What this fallacy does to historical personages it can also do in a slightly different and less intense way to a religious institution like the caste-system. If anti-caste movements have been simultaneously present in Hinduism with caste atrocities, a treatment of caste independent of this trend is bound to be affected by it. Since the caste-system was present in practically all the world cultures a description of this subject as a unique phenomenon in Hinduism will be partially affected by it.

If this system began to be rigid a little earlier than the time of Buddha, we have also records of anti-caste movements from very early periods. "Thus right from the times of the Upaniṣads, if not earlier, thinkers have spoken against the caste-system. Buddha preached against the caste-system 2500 years back... During the twelfth century Basovesvara developed a new sect (the Lingaites) which did not admit the caste-system. About the same period Ramanuja brought a great reform in Vaiṣnavism. Right through there have been attempts by great reformers like Kabir and Chaitanya to uplift the people belonging to the lower castes and the untouchable castes."²⁹ In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the Aryasamaj, Brahmasamaj, Ramakriṣṇa Mission and Theosophical movement have been working for the abolition of caste discriminations. In recent times Gandhiji and his followers have been the most efficient champions against the social injustices caused by this system.

29. Dr Kuppaswamy, *Social Change in India*, "The Caste System", Delhi, Vikas Publications, 1972.

When we realize, as has been pointed out by Prof. Ghurye³⁰ that this system was present in the ancient cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, China, Japan, Greece and Rome we should not blame Hinduism as a religious phenomenon, for the origin of caste in India. During the Sassanian period in Iran priests were likened to the head of man, the warriors to his hands, the husbandmen to the stomach and the artisans to the feet. This metaphor is similar to the one in the *R̥gveda* (X:90:12) where the origin of caste is described.

For the Jews, the chosen people, contact with the Gentiles, Samaritans and the Publicans implied ritual impurity (Jn. 4:9 and 18:28 and 39: Mt. 9:11, Act. 10:14 and 28). In Israel the situation of the slaves was worse than that of the untouchables of India (Ex. 21, Lv. 25:35 ff. Is. 22:2).³¹

3. The fallacy of cross comparison between the real and the ideal

On September 18, 1972, Mr Frank Moraes, Editor in Chief of the *Indian Express*, published in his paper, an article under the title 'Hindu Ethos' maintaining the view that the caste-system and untouchability are part and parcel of Hinduism. On the following day, in the same newspaper, Dr Karan Singh, the Union Minister of Tourism and Aviation, argued against Mr Moraes pointing out that according to the essential teachings of Hinduism, mankind is fundamentally one and that there exists a divine spark in every man and so, if there are caste discriminations in Hinduism it is not because of Hinduism but in spite of it. In this controversy what happened was that Mr Moraes judged Hinduism on the basis of the real or factual elements while Dr Karan Singh did so on the basis of the ideal or essential elements.

It usually happens to people, especially to those who fanatically adhere to the dogmas and the precepts of their own

30. Cfr. *Caste and Class in India*, p. 119 ff.

31. Cfr. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, "doulos", Michigan: W.M.D. Eerdomans Publishing Company, 1966.

religion, that their attention is chiefly focused on the ideal elements of their own religions and on the factual elements of others. The reason for this seems to be that one is constantly challenged or even haunted by the ideals proposed by the religion of one's birth, no matter whether one ignores or adheres to them, while what ordinarily strikes one in the other religions is the factual elements which are the objects of the external senses.³² Now, if we take seriously into account the geographical and historical dimensions of truth, we will have to admit that, by and large, the ideal elements in all religions are very sublime while the real elements fall far short of the ideal. Dr Karan Singh does not fall deeply into the fallacy which we are concerned with, since he defends Hinduism on the basis of the ideal elements of Hinduism itself. Nor does Mr Moraes fall fully into this fallacy since he has never given the impression of being enamoured of any religion in particular. This fallacy occurs when one, taking the ideal elements in one's own religion as simply 'my religion' and the factual elements in other religions simply as 'your religion', compares them mutually and passes evaluational judgements on other religions on the basis of this ideal-real cross comparison.

What a village catechist said in the course of a talk with his villagers illustrates this fallacy: "We Christians not only love our friends but also our enemies, unlike the pagans who do not practise this 'new commandment'. We are the light of the world as our Lord has told us while the heathens remain in the darkness of sin." This zealous catechist was well aware of the special reputation of the Christians of his village for inter-denominational rivalry and alcoholism. All the same he could not but fall into the fallacy of cross comparison between the Christian ideal and the non-Christian factual elements.

Many of the Christians who pass harsh judgements on Hinduism because of the caste-system, would not have done so if they were well aware of this fallacy. If a Christian critic of the caste-system wants to avoid it he should not overlook social injustices like the slave trade, colour discrimination and colonialism which were practised by the Christian nations and at the

32. Here we are speaking of a situation of religious pluralism.

same time he should enquire whether the Hindu ideal is responsible for this system.

Conclusion

Some missionaries still seem to think that current doctrines on inter-religious dialogue are something forced upon them as a measure of prudence owing to the anti-missionary climate in the country, and so it is only second-best to evangelization. But such an idea of dialogue is far from the truth. Evangelization could be described as the loving 'incarnation' (i.e. according to the particular demands of the human situation), communication to our fellowmen of God's love manifested in Christ. The moment we realize that dialogue is an 'incarnational' expression of this evangelical love "poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5), the distinction between evangelization and dialogue seems superfluous. Of course, in the latter concept the aspect of mutual enrichment and mutual fulfilment is emphasized in a special way on the basis that the non-Christian religions contain in them the "seeds of the Word"³³ and are illumined by the Light of Christ³⁴ and that an "Ineffable mystery" which was definitively disclosed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, has been and still is at work among the non-Christian religions³⁵. Dialogue understood in this sense is a matter of deep spirituality which implies great love as well as deep insights into the mystery of God's universal love and man's universal blood-relationship because of the New Covenant in the blood of Christ.

Having in mind definite pastoral situations we have laboured the point of the *Dialogical Stand-point* enthusiastically. To give an example, last year Swamy Chidbhavananda published a book entitled *The Holy Bible in the Light of Vedanta*³⁶. This book is bound to hurt the feelings of any committed Christian, as *de facto* it has done and still is doing. Why? It is not exactly because he has brought forward a number of instances to show that there are many things in the Bible which cannot be squared with modern science or with present-day moral consciousness. We

33. Vat. II. *Ad Gentes*, nos. 11 and 15

34. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 57 and *Nostra Aetate* no. 2

35. Nagpur Theological Conference, Declaration, no. 13

have no reason to say, especially if we know of his other spiritual writings, that he has deliberately distorted the facts. In fact, Fr J.N.M. Wijngaards, in his work *God's Word to Israel*, under the title "The Devil's Advocate Has His Ways"³⁷ has highlighted many more negative aspects of the Bible like the unscientific doctrines, internal contradictions and defective moral teachings than the Swamiji. But the Swamiji's book wounds while Fr Wijngaard's heals. The chief reason for this is that the Swamiji wrote his book without getting into the commitment dimension of Christianity and so without viewing this religion from the dialogical stand-point. But if we realize that even more onesidedly than this, hundreds of books and articles have been written on the scriptures, traditions, rites, festivals and so on, of Hinduism, by half-baked Christian Indologists we may not find it difficult to excuse Swami Chidbhananda.

"Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you."

In recent years in India, communal riots have been taking heavy toll of human lives. Each riot not only thickens the walls that divide the different religious groups but also leaves a situation of hatred and revenge ready for more bloodshed. The choice before today's Indian youth, who are becoming more and more impatient at the artificial barriers of caste and creed, is primarily not between this religion and that but between religion and irreligion. Unless the different religions come together with openness of heart and mind, religiosity as such is going to be discredited and to be looked upon as a useless burden rather than a necessary boost in man's onward march towards fulfilment. One of the most opportune, urgent and fruitful contributions the Church in India can make to day to the socio-religious life of India is to play a leading role in the matter of inter-religious dialogue.

Ishanand Vempeny

37. Ranchi: Catholic Press, 1971, pp. 22 to 59.

Models for the "Coming Convergence of World Religions"

Religious man has always sought to communicate his experience of Ultimacy by means of symbols. These symbols are, in updated scientific language, models reflecting the Experience but never equal to it. As a result of the magnitude of the margin between the model and the subject matter to which it approximates, the system produced is continually open to adjustments and change in the light of newly uncovered facts. Because contemporary man's observation of the early stages of convergence has challenged current religious models, theologians have found it necessary to adjust, broaden, and recreate models capable of encompassing the variety of man's religious experience, and of aiding man in his movement toward the convergent future.

Robley Edward Whitson

Among these are Robley Edward Whitson who explores the very process of theologizing, expanding the traditionally Western concept to global proportions. Viewed as an intellectual process of man's knowing, comparable to all other disciplines and branches of knowledge, theology is regarded as examining, systematizing, analyzing, and articulating the observable facts of man's relationship with Ultimacy. Thus, Whitson defines theology as "the systematization of man's experience of definitive relationship."¹

In an attempt to stress the intellectual nature of theology and establish it as a science, Whitson proposes a "binary mathematical model"² which consists of the dual categories of *logos*

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1. Robley Edward Whitson, *The Coming Convergence of World Religions* (New York: Newman Press, 1971), p. 113.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 124

and *theos* in an and/both rather than an either/or relationship. His model is one which neglects the normal mathematical set theory of binary operation, i.e., the addition of an operator. The and/ both link in the model should be read to mean simultaneous or concurrent states. Whitson's use of a mathematical model creates a scientific aura, but his pseudo-scientific approach tends to obfuscate the relationship between *logos* and *theos* and the purpose of the model. Beneath the complicated confusion is an extremely simple empirical model which consists of *logos* representing man (one) as a social being (not one) in a historical process. This relationship is elaborated as the Confucian concept of "jen" (or *man and 2*). The function of *logos* is to hypothesize a conceptual content for the *theos* category. Thus within the *theos* category there is one conceptualization of Ultimacy as unknowable or ineffable and many (not one) objectifications postulated for Ultimacy. Hence, his model is pictured quite simply:

Whitson's Binary Mathematical Model

| <i>Theos</i> | <i>Logos</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Brahman | Hindu |
| Allah | Muslim |
| Ra | Ancient Egyptian |
| <u>Jesus Christ</u> | <u>Christian</u> |
| <u>Global God</u> | <u>Global Man</u> |

Theos Category - conceptualizations (one, i.e., the ineffable aspect and *not one*, i.e., the namable aspect as described by various cultures) of Definitive Relationship.

Logos Category - man (*one*, i.e., as an individual) and *not one*, (i.e., as social in cultural historical orientations).

This basic model broadens the concept of theology to include every conceivable religious tradition, thereby expanding the concept and the category beyond its traditional Western limits (i.e., the tendency to bind theology to scriptural revelation). This would seem to be Whitson's major contribution to the theology of world religions. Yet the thrust of such an

approach is not likely to appeal to an Easterner since it is *merely* an attempt to assert that theology is related to all human experience and that it shares a place with science in the analysis of such experience. Thus Whitson's model allows theology to maintain its position precisely as a discipline during the coming convergence of *disciplines*. Although Whitson may satisfy the intellectual cravings of Western scientific man, who requires such a connection, Eastern Man tends to be far less logically oriented, nor has he divided his disciplines as finely as Western Man.

The validity of the empirical data employed in Whitson's 'Binary Mathematical Model' could be supported by a widespread agreement of human observers. Yet his use of the model to extrapolate a forecast of a global *logos* which postulates a global *theos* presupposes the acceptance by all men of the Western belief in the reality of time as a linear process moving towards convergence. In terms of the convergence of World Religions, Whitson's model speaks *only* to Western man already convinced of the process of convergence with the message that theology will *not* pass away; rather it will be relevant for a global society which will continue to theologize. His model really resolves no major problems in the theology of world religions. It merely recognizes that convergence is upon us, and invites all to become dedicated to this process. In short, he is arguing for a commitment to the principle of a unitive convergence of religions. Yet only once such a commitment is established can the theologian really begin the task of building ecumenical models, models capable of supporting man in the process of convergence as well as opening an inter-religious path to communion.

Raymond Panikkar

One such model has been designed by Raymond Panikkar. His *Theandric Synthesis*, in contrast to Whitson's model, is a well-structured multi-perspective model which correlates a *theandric* theoretical representation and a *forms of spirituality* model. For Panikkar, the empirical data consist of three basic *forms of spirituality* or spiritual *Paths*, viz., "karma-marga," "bhakti-marga," and "jñāna-marga."

Iconolatry ("karma-marga") is described as characterized by the performance of ritual action and the observations of

'laws.' Anthropomorphic projections of creature-like attributes are often projected by men on their symbols for Ultimacy. Whether these projections be material and visible or mental and invisible, they are to be viewed *merely* as the point of departure in the ascent to the Ultimate. This spirituality is, perhaps, the most basic form of human religious consciousness.

Personalism (bhakti-marga) is viewed as a refinement of iconolatry. It adds the dimension of a personal relationship with the Absolute. Love, a mutual co-offering, dominates this spirituality; refusal to love is viewed as the ultimate evil.

Advaita spirituality (jnana-marga) seeks a total union with an Absolute which is not Other. Personalism or bhaktimarga illustrated well the difficulties of maintaining an 'I-Thou' relationship with an Absolute which is Other. The distance and separation necessary to maintain this required reciprocal love union creates the paradox of love seen as an act of total self-renunciation and the maintenance of a 'self to love with'. In Advaita, however, there is a total absence of an Object while concomitantly the subject ceases to exist. Thus the characteristics of silence, abandonment, and absolute detachment are features of this Path. Clearly, Advaita is a markedly different Path from either "bhakti" or "karma."

Keenly realizing the need to compare only 'like with like', Panikkar's model seeks the *within* of various traditions. Thus his model selects empirical data which penetrates to the *spiritual core of man*; it seeks to avoid the limitations of historical or evolutionary time and the sociological, cultural manifestations of particular eras. As a direct result, it has a wide and universal appeal.

These diverse *forms of spirituality* are reconciled by correlating them with the *theandric principle*, an expansion of the traditional Christian theory of the Trinity, a theory existent but differently expressed in other religions. Panikkar's enlargement of the Trinity challenges the traditional explanation of three persons, one nature. Strictly speaking, there is only one person, the Son, who is the Father. The Father who has emptied himself totally

(except for an irreducible 'residue') is no longer person or being but non-being. The Spirit is the Love which flows from the Source of Being (Non-Being) to the Being (Son) and is returned to the Source of Being. Thus Trinitarian theory and empirical data correlate to form Panikkar's *theandric principle*. The term 'theandric' is chosen to distinguish this notion from the traditional Christian concept as well as to incorporate the dimension of humanity (incarnation) in the trans-human. His model appears thus:

Panikkar's Theandric Synthesis

| <i>Trinity</i> | <i>Spiritualities</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| I Father | Advaita |
| Above All | i.e., Nirvana |
| Transcendent | Sunya |
| Source of Being | |
| Non-Being | |
| II Son | Iconolatry – |
| Through All | Personalism |
| Being | i.e., Yahweh |
| (The Being of | Isvara, Christ |
| the Father) | |
| Person | |
| III Spirit | Advaita |
| Within All | i.e., Atman |
| Immanence | |
| End or Return | |
| of Being | |
| Ocean of Being | |

It should be clearly noted, however, that the placing of symbols from various religious traditions in the same category (e. g., Isvara, Yahweh, Christ) *does not* indicate their equality. Superficial comparisons should be studiously avoided if the external interpretation of religious symbols is to equal the internal one. In the application of his *Homological Principle*, Panikkar correlates the symbols in terms of their functions, i. e., their precise place and role, within their religious tradition. As an example, Yahweh and Brahman both function as First Cause but Yahweh also functions as Mediator whereas Isvara serves this function in

Hinduism; therefore Panikkar points out that Yahweh and Brahman cannot be interchanged in the symbolic systems of the two religions.

Panikkar's theandric synthesis (his linking of the *Theandric Principle* with his *Homological Principle*) offers a model which allows the problem of developing a theology of world religions to be seen *clearly*. It effectively prepares the ground for genuine dialogue both within a religious tradition ("intra-dialogue") as well as externally ("inter-dialogue") i. e., dialogue among the religious traditions. 'Intra-dialogue' fosters the updating, clarifying, expanding, and creating of new symbols within a particular religious tradition. 'Inter-dialogue' protects against the introduction of uncritical and invalid assumptions while 'illuminating the vectors in the sumtotal of the data'. Thus Panikkar's *Dialogical Principle* opens the door to a greater awareness among the various traditions, fosters mutual sharing, and provides the climate for the cultivation of love. So often, in such love, the apparent contradictions of logic and existence are harmonized.

The dynamics of Raymond Panikkar's *Theandric Synthesis* avoids the pitfalls of insufficient analytic approaches, such as those which concentrate solely on abstract unity (the Essential Position), those concentrating only on concrete diversity (the Existential Position), those which emphasize immanence (the Centripetal Position), or transcendence (the Centrifugal Position), and those which are dominated by the subjective (Absorption) or the objective (Epoché). Thus his multi-dimensional model synthesizes unity and plurality, transcendence and immanence, subjectivity and objectivity, holding the promise and the challenge to perform a new step in the consciousness of men, and responding to the "Kairos" of today, the urge for universality and synthesis among the world religions.

Frank Podgorski

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